Change in attitudes of Gulf countries towards India

3692. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether recently there is a qualitative change in the attitude and thinking of Gulf countries towards India indicating fastening stronger ties on economic matters *vis-a-vis* Pakistan;

(b) if so, whether Government's attention has been drawn to the views expressed in this regard by the representatives of the Gulf countries at OPEC meeting held during the last week of March, 2001; and

(c) if so, the concrete steps proposed to be taken by Government in initiating better economic/trade relations with the Gulf countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI KRISHNAMRAJU): (a) The Gulf region is part of India's neighbourhood and India has had traditionally close and friendly relations with the Gulf countries. These relations have been further strengthened through enhanced economic and commercial exchanges.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Several initiatives in the private and public sectors have been taken through the mechanism of the Joint Commission Meetings and Joint Business Councils with the Gulf countries for enhancing economic exchanges and attracting investments.

Normalisation of relations with Canada

3693. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Canada has decided to resume normal ties with India, ending a two years freeze in relations over India's nuclear weapons testing;

(b) if so, whether Canada has already conveyed their decision for resuming normal ties with India;